Senators Dawdle on Kleindienst

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With the chamber almost empty and the session punctuated by repeated quorum calls, the Senate yesterday dawdled through another day of debate on the nomination of Richard G. Kleindienst as attorney general.

Sens. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) and Thomas J. McIntyre (D-N.H.) called upon their colleagues to send the nomination to the Juciciary Committee a second time for a new round of hearings of Kleindienst's role in the Justice Department's settlement of the anti-merger suit against international Telephone and International Telephone and Telegraph Corp.

McIntyre said he hasn't made up his mind about confirmation but hopes for new hearings because there are so many unanswered questions on the ITT case.

Kennedy, who has led the opposition to Kleindienst from the start, made the same plea for renewed hearings. He argued that more questioning is needed of witnesses like ITT lobbyist Dita Beard and White House aides William Timmons and Peter Flanigan, to determine whether political pressures and an ITT offer to help underwrite the Republican National Convention led the government to settle the merger case on terms favorable to ITT.

Sen. Marlow W. Cook (R-Ky.) defended the nomination. But like Kennedy and McIntyre, he spoke of a nearly empty chamber. At most times during the five-hour session, no more than one or two other senators were on the floor.

Almost all vote counts taken by senators for and against the nominee show that if the vote were taken now, Kleindienst would be confirmed with no more than 25 to 30 votes in opposition, perhaps not even that many.